1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

arrived at this plantation to look for work. Led by their chiefs, they had made the long journey from the region of their homes. The chiefs, some of whom had met us in the Chaco, whilst others had only heard of us, wished to pay us a call. Personally I do not possess any notes about this reception, but I have come across some in Fries' diary. He thus refers to the incident: »When the Choroti Indians, whom we knew from Tatarenda and who were now working here, saw us, they came, almost to a man, and greeted us, being evidently very glad to meet us again. *The principal chief, at the head of all the lesser caziques*, was among those who came and paid us their respects.»[1]

A favoured position in the village community is that held by the medicine men; for their services they are rewarded by a — from a Choroti point of view — generous remuneration in the form of food and drink. That among the Choroti the medicine men are held in great esteem, and that everybody is anxious to be on good terms with them, appears only natural to anyone with a knowledge of what an important part magical conceptions play with these Indians. It is largely by the Finlander explorer, Rafael Karsten — oft-quoted in the present work — that ethnological science has been enriched by information and detailed reports on the magical customs and practices of the Choroti, as well as of other Chaco tribes.[2]

The Choroti Indians believe that man, all his life through, is more or less subject to influences from spirits, who, on the whole, are of a harmful nature. Especial danger is to be apprehended from spirits on certain occasions such as child-birth, pubescence and death. Usually the evil is worked by a spirit, »mohsek», entering a person through one of the orifices of his body and thereby assuming possession of him. If at birth a child is deformed or very sickly, it is supposed to be possessed by some evil »moshek», and is on that account killed.[3] When a girl has attained the age of puberty, during the first critical, time she must keep a covering over her head, so that no evil spirit may be able to enter her body by way of her nose, mouth, eyes or ears.[4] The occasion of a girl attaining puberty is celebrated with a dance which undoubtedly is of a magical character.

[1] Professor Robert Fries: diary, X, p. 14. Italics by von Rosen.
[2] See Bibliography attached.
[3] Karsten (4), p. 176.
[4] Karsten (4), p. 165.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

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shape of a horse [1]) — an animal which is regarded with superstition by the Choroti — and will kill the »good spirit» of the inimical sorcerer. The latter, being thus deprived of his assistant genius, will fall an easy victim to his assailant.

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The guardian spirit is not hereditary but is acquired individually in the course of life and to a certain degree through teaching. The older a person grows, the more power and influence he is believed, by the Tobas, to gain over his *peyâk nôtta*; hence the medicine-men are generally men of advanced age. The same may be said of the *Choroti*, who regard every old man as being more or less a sorcerer and endowed with supernatural powers. Since the women are always physically and spiritually weaker than men, they have always more difficulty in obtaining guardian spirits. I only know of a special initiation for women, who dedicate themselves to the exercise of the magic art, in the case of the Choroti. A women who wants to become a sorcerer, I was told, must eat a raw chirimoya fruit (*Anona chirimolia?*). When ripe, the chirimoya is edible and good; but in an unripe condition it is said to be poisonous, and a person eating of it according to the belief of the Indians will die or fall ill. If however the woman, while she is eating the raw fruit, performs the ceremony *Kausimâ* with the magical rattle staffs, she will escape harm, and she will moreover in the future be able to conjure spirits with success. This idea is in fact typical of the initiation ceremonies of the Indians: the woman has been in contact with evil spirits but has been able to resist them, in consequence she has been rendered immune against them and acquired power over them which enables her to use them for her own ends in the future.

C [827]

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Apart from the fact that the »good spirit» of the Choroti medicine-men is at least in some cases believed to appear in the form of a horse, the »good spirits» are in their external appearance like other spirits. The *Tobas* say that their *peyâk nôtta* dwells in the heavens (*piyim*) from where he comes down to assist the medicine-man who invokes him. Similarly the Choroti say that their *môhsek eis*, when summond by the sorcerer comes down from the sky, but the »sky» (*pôle*) is not to the Choroti a definite place like the *piyim* of the Tobas. *Piyim* has developed into a mythological concept: it signifies Paradise or the realm of the dead of the Toba Indians. When a Toba Indian dies, I was told,

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[1]) Since the horse was introduced among the Chaco Indians by Europeans, this is not of course an original idea of the Choroti.